

PRESS RELEASE

Milan's Ricordi Archive Makes Historic Magazine Collection Available Online

- Complete collection freely researchable at digitalarchivioricordi.com
- All 5,700 original issues from 1842 to 1965 soon also available via the online library Wikisource
- Bertelsmann is gradually making all of the key holdings of the leading archive on Italian opera history digitally accessible

Gütersloh, November 29, 2021 – In the course of digitizing thousands of original documents on Italian opera history, the Ricordi Archive, which belongs to Bertelsmann, is now making all of Casa Ricordi's music and cultural magazines available online. The magazines tell the dazzling story of Milan's cultural scene in the 19th and 20th centuries, which was strongly influenced by the Casa Ricordi publishing house over a period of some 120 years.

This takes the process of digitizing the archive, which began in 2016 with the digital publication of some 13,500 historical costume drawings, stage designs, and portraits, and was expanded in 2018 to include the extensive business correspondence, to a new dimension. In the course of this elaborate process, which is supported by the academic community, all key holdings are to be gradually transferred to the Ricordi Archive's freely accessible *Collezione Digitale*, thereby opening them up to the general public.

The journals published by Casa Ricordi – an archive holding that is unique for its comprehensiveness – today form an important part of the Ricordi Archive and are housed in its premises at Milan's Palazzo di Brera. Since 2019, the nearly 6,000 volumes of periodicals, with a combined total of more than 65,000 pages, have been scanned in high resolution, converted into fully searchable texts using OCR text recognition technology, and included in the *Collezione Digitale* (digitalarchivioricordi.com/en/periodicals).

Thanks to a cooperation with Wikimedia Italia, they will also gradually be uploaded to the free text and source collection Wikisource, where the wiki community can fine-tune the scanned data and enhance them as needed. As with the transcription of the collection of letters, the online community will once again have a crucial role to play: through their support, the journals will become transparent, freely accessible historical sources that are precisely searchable, keyword-indexed, and linked to other Wikimedia resources such as the online encyclopedia Wikipedia. At the same time, errors in the automatic text recognition process are corrected.

Karin Schlautmann, Executive Vice President Corporate Communications at Bertelsmann, says: "As the owner of the Ricordi Archive, Bertelsmann feels responsible not only for preserving the documents it contains, spanning 200 years of Italian opera history, as best as possible, but also for making them accessible to a broad public. We are now at an advanced stage of digitizing the archive and are especially pleased that our crowdsourcing projects

have been so well received. The Ricordi Archive's Collezione Digitale is already a real treasure trove for researchers and music lovers all over the world."

The magazines of Casa Ricordi tell the story of one of the largest music publishers of the 19th century and of a unique cultural positioning: besides having a keen sense for musical trends, the Ricordi publishers also had an irrepressibly innovative spirit in areas such as print graphics, design and advertising that spanned several generations. Not least through their magazines, they dominated Italy's, and perhaps even all of Europe's, musical discourse over decades.

Casa Ricordi's first magazine, the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, made its debut in 1842. This historic Italian weekly – one of the first to eclectically cover music, theatrical performances, politics, and general current affairs – was published for sixty years. It was joined over the years by numerous other periodicals, such as *Rivista Minima* (1871-1878), *Musica e Musicisti* (1902-1905), *Ars et Labor* (1906-1912), *Musica d'Oggi* (1919-1942 and 1958-1965), and *Ricordiana* (1951-1957).

Among the most fascinating contents are richly illustrated travelogues, news about the most important contemporary events, fashion reports from London and Paris, book reviews and biographies of famous artists. The music reviews were written by independent critics, who were mostly full of praise, but did not shy away from scathing reviews, either. Some publications contained sheet music with commissioned works of chamber music, collectibles such as art postcards, and serialized novels. Often, readers were invited to enter prize draws for valuable prizes such as a piano.

One of the most interesting aspects is the development over time of the ads placed in the magazines for a wide range of products – from musical instruments to ceramic products, steam heaters, and galvanizing services. The ads became increasingly sophisticated over the years, and reflected an increasing opening up of the culture community, which was also accompanied by commercialization: the magazines were part of how Ricordi's editions of sheet music found their way into middle-class households, thus opening up new target audiences. Then as now, creative artists and their publishers were involved in debates about the protection of copyrights. When new works were announced in the magazines, precautionary warnings were issued against copyright infringement, and the "piracy" of music editions was condemned in the strongest terms.

The magazines are also important contemporary documents for tracing the history of graphic design: they were designed and printed in the Officine Grafiche Ricordi, the publisher's own design department, where famous illustrators such as Marcello Dudovich, Leopoldo Metlicovitz, and Aleardo Terzi worked. Posters and the covers of Casa Ricordi's music editions were also designed there. The works created by the Officine Grafiche are of remarkable beauty and originality.

The Ricordi Archive, which has been part of Bertelsmann since 1994, is regarded as one of the world's most valuable privately owned music collections. Its holdings include about 7,800 original scores for more than 600 operas – including valuable original manuscripts by Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini – as well as some 10,000 libretti, approximately 6,000 historical photographs, numerous costume drawings, and the complete business correspondence of Casa Ricordi from 1888 to 1962. Bertelsmann is creating a comprehensive index of the archive materials, and in many cases also restoring and digitizing them.

For many years, the international media, services, and education group has been engaged in a variety of cultural initiatives both in Germany and internationally. The Group's "Culture@Bertelsmann" activities comprise exhibitions, readings and concerts, the "Blue Sofa" literary format, as well as a commitment to preserving Europe's cultural heritage – as in the case of the Ricordi Archive. As a company with a long history in filmmaking, Bertelsmann also supports and sponsors the restoration, digitization and screening of major silent films.

For more information on the Ricordi Archive: bertelsmann.com/ricordi and archivioricordi.com/en

About Bertelsmann

Bertelsmann is a media, services and education company that operates in about 50 countries around the world. It includes the broadcaster RTL Group, the trade book publisher Penguin Random House, the magazine publisher Gruner + Jahr, the music company BMG, the service provider Arvato, the Bertelsmann Printing Group, the Bertelsmann Education Group and Bertelsmann Investments, an international network of funds. The company has around 130,000 employees and generated revenues of €17.3 billion in the 2020 financial year. Bertelsmann stands for creativity and entrepreneurship. This combination promotes first-class media content and innovative service solutions that inspire customers around the world. Bertelsmann aspires to achieve climate neutrality by 2030. In 2021, Bertelsmann commemorates the 100th birthday of Reinhard Mohn, the Group's late post-war founder and longtime Chairman and CEO.

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